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190215 - Pebworth NP Reg 16 Covering Letter (Submitted).docx



Planning Policy
Wychavon District Council
Civic Centre
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Persnore
WR10 1PT

Richard Cooke

By E-Mail: policy.plans@wychavon.gov.uk

Dear Sirs,

Pebworth Submitted Neighbourhood Plan, Regulation 16 Consultation

Town and Country Planning, England, Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012

We are pleased to provide the following representations to the Submission Draft Regulation 16 consultation of the Pebworth Parish Neighbourhood Plan. These comments are submitted by Savills on behalf of our client, CALA Homes (Midlands) Limited, who have an interest in land at Fibrex Nurseries, Honeybourne Road, Pebworth.

Our client has promoted the Fibrex Nurseries site for development through a submission to the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) 'Call for Sites'. The Call for Sites submission identified the whole of the Fibrex Nurseries site as both available and suitable for residential development, and capable of delivering up to 43 homes.

The comments in this letter are submitted to Wychavon District Council as part of the Council's Regulation 16 NDP consultation, and build upon those submitted to the Parish Council as part of its Regulation 14 consultation in July 2018. In that consultation response, our client was pleased to note that the Draft Neighbourhood Plan identified part of the site as an allocation for residential development.

Our client is pleased that the Submission draft Neighbourhood Plan also proposes to allocate part of the site for residential development. This approach recognises that development at this location is sustainable and can make a positive contribution to the village and wider Parish.

First these representations support the proposed allocation of the Fibrex Nurseries site, which comprises approximately half of the available land. They highlight a larger allocation could be more appropriate and deliver additional benefits.

Background and Strategic Policy Context

The draft Neighbourhood Plan covers the whole Pebworth Parish Council Area, including the settlements of Pebworth, Broad Marston and Ullington. When in force, the Neighbourhood Plan will be part of the Statutory Development Plan for the area alongside the adopted SWDP, which has been prepared jointly by the councils of Worcester City, Malvern Hills District and Wychavon District.

To satisfy the regulations, the Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the SWDP, which was adopted in 2016 and has a plan period of 2006-2030. The south Worcestershire councils have commenced a review of the SWDP to ensure its policies remain up to date. A call for sites exercise was carried out between May and July 2018 (as noted above) and an Issues and Options consultation commenced in November 2018. No detailed draft policies have yet been published for consultation.

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Policy SWDP 3 (Employment, Housing and Retail Provision Requirement and Delivery) of the adopted SWDP seeks to manage the delivery of housing, employment land and retail floorspace in south Worcestershire over the Plan period. The Policy seeks to provide 28,400 additional dwellings overall (Table 4b), in the period.

Wychavon District (excluding the 'Wider Worcester Area') is to provide an additional 10,600 dwellings at a rate of 407 dwellings per year between 2018 and 2030. The Wychavon housing figure includes 7,300 market homes towards the 28,400 total. This includes 3,300 affordable properties towards an overall south Worcestershire target of 8,800 affordable dwellings. The housing figures do not make provision for external unmet need that may arise from outside the plan area through the Duty to Co-operate.

The adopted SWDP allocates strategic development sites (Policies SWDP 43-59), none of which fall within the designated Pebworth Neighbourhood Plan Area. Subsequent SWDP policies seek to ensure that development in south Worcestershire is sustainable. They include policies seek the effective use of land (Policy SWDP 13), an appropriate mix of market housing (Policy SWDP 14) and ensure that affordable housing needs (Policy SWDP 15) are met.

Pebworth Submitted Neighbourhood Plan – Comments on behalf of Cala Homes (UK) Limited

We set out our comments on individual draft policies in the Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan below.

Policy P1 (Site Allocation Policy – Land at Fibrex Nursery) – Support

The proposed allocation of land at Fibrex Nurseries is both welcomed and supported and our client confirms that the extent of the draft allocation is immediately available for residential development. The site can contribute to housing supply in Pebworth and help Wychavon District Council to deliver its portion of the overall south Worcestershire target housing figure.

Fibrex Nurseries immediately adjoins recent residential development at Pebworth and is a sustainable location for additional residential development. Annex D to Policy SWDP 2 (Development Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy) identifies Pebworth as a Category 3 village and a suitable location to accommodate market and affordable housing needs.

The site is within walking and cycling distance of the existing community facilities including Pebworth Primary School, the Village Hall, St Peter's Church and the Mason's Arms Public House. Public transport is also within walking distance of the site. Residential development will provide additional demand for these services, helping them to remain viable and available to the whole community. The nearest bus stop is within 200m and offers direct access to facilities in Honeybourne, Evesham and beyond. Rail services operate from Honeybourne approximately 2km to the south west of the site.

The draft Policy does not propose to allocate all of the available land at Fibrex Nurseries for development and excludes land at the rear of the site. This land is also available for immediate residential development. Subject to detailed technical studies it could, in conjunction with the proposed allocation, deliver circa 43 dwellings, partly on brownfield land. A larger allocation would make effective use of the available land and provide additional benefits to the local community, in terms of the supply of market and affordable homes and support to community facilities, as outlined below.

Affordable Housing

The Parish Council's Housing Needs Survey (published 2017) identifies a need for up to 20 affordable homes in the Parish whereas, in combination with draft Policy 2, the draft Policy seeks to restrict development at the site to bungalows and affordable market housing only. This means that the Neighbourhood Plan does not make any provision for affordable housing in Pebworth or, indeed, within the Parish boundary.

The Neighbourhood Plan envisages that more 'immediate need' will instead be met by new development permitted on the edge of the Parish, where approximately 133 affordable homes of differing tenures and sizes have been approved as part of a large scheme for 380 homes. The permission relied upon is on land adjacent to Sims Metals UK at Long Marston Pebworth (scheme granted at appeal in July 2014, Reference W/13/00132), which is to the north east of Pebworth and outside the Neighbourhood Plan boundary.

However, there are ongoing concerns as to the delivery of the Long Marston scheme, as noted in the Council's July 2017 'Five Year Housing Land Supply' calculation. Reserved matters applications W/16/01618/RM and W/16/00222/RM remain undetermined. Indeed, Wychavon District Council has chosen to discount the whole site (380 dwellings) from the 2017 5YHLS calculation and have done the same in the July 2018 calculation. This includes the 133 affordable homes that the development was due to provide.

The proposed allocation at Fibrex Nurseries, and an expanded allocation to include all of the available land at the site, would help to meet affordable housing need within the Parish boundary. The absence of development constraints and the availability of the land for immediate development provides greater certainty in meeting the affordable housing needs in a sustainable location, within the Parish boundary.

It should also be noted that the National Planning Policy Framework states that developments of under 10 units are not required to provide an Affordable Housing contribution. By allocating only part of the Fibrex Nurseries site for 10-12 units, the site is unable to contribute to the Affordable Housing need in the Village.

Flood Risk

The Submission NDP Flood Risk Statement shows that the Fibrex Nurseries site is within Flood Zone 1 where there is a less than a 1 in 1000 annual probability of river or sea flooding. Whilst a risk of surface water flooding along Honeybourne Road and in adjacent fields is identified, the Statement confirms that the associated flood risk extents do not affect the site and would not impact on development within it. The southern access to the site is in area of low flood risk.

The Statement identifies the existing watercourse near to the eastern site boundary as the possible source of surface water flood risk, and the draft policy seeks to ensure that it is modelled as part of a site-specific flood risk assessment. The draft NDP policy goes on to require that an attenuation pond be provided to address both on and off-site surface water flooding issues. This absolute obligation appears to go beyond the requirement of Policy SWDP 28 (Management of Flood Risk), which requires development proposals only to explore opportunities to reduce flood risk overall.

The provision of an attenuation pond to address off-site flood risk can provide benefits to the local community in terms of reduced flood risk. This can be as investigated at the planning application stage, although it is noted that the area of surface water flood risk extends well the Fibrex Nurseries site. The policy should be clear that the site is not required to fully resolve the flood risk issue, but instead explore opportunities to provide betterment, which could include additional attenuation. Any betterment can be weighed positively in the planning balance.

The construction and maintenance of further attenuation, and so the creation of betterment, would need to be funded through the capital receipts from any development. As such, the policy should therefore make clear that the requirement is subject to viability testing.

The specific requirement for surface water attenuation should also be revised, given that surface water attenuation will reduce the net developable area, and the ability to generate the required capital receipts. Alternative approaches should be considered. In addition, utilising the full extent of the available land at the Fibrex Nurseries provides a greater opportunity to fund a flood mitigation scheme and to secure community benefits associated with reduced surface water flood risk.

Loss of 'Employment Land'

Some responses to the Parish Council's Regulation 14 consultation have asked if the proposed site allocation would result in the potential loss of employment land. However, the site is currently occupied by a nursery business and principally comprises a number of glass houses and polytunnels, with some brick buildings also present. The nursery business grows a variety of plants and comprises a horticulture activity, with an element of sales to the visiting public.

Whilst the existing business is employment generating, the lawful use is considered to be a mixed *sui generis*. On this basis, the existing use falls beyond the scope of SWDP Policy 12 (Protection of Existing Employment Sites), the relevant employment protection policy in view of Pebworth being a Category 3 village within the SEDP settlement hierarchy (Policy SWDP 2, Annex D confirms).

SWDP Policy 12 provides protection for sites in rural areas that are currently or were last used for B1, B2, B8, leisure and / or recreation related purposes. There is, therefore, no requirement to demonstrate that the site is no longer viable for an employment generating use in the case of a proposed change to a non-employment generating use such as residential.

The SWDP strategic approach to encourage economic growth is, in any case, to locate new employment development at strategic allocated sites, or alternatively on existing employment sites through the conversion of existing buildings. In this particular case, it is considered unlikely that another business would be able to occupy the Fibrex Nurseries site, given that the specialist nature of the existing glass houses and poly tunnels which mean they are not capable of conversion to an alternative use.

The redevelopment of the Fibrex Nurseries site for residential use provides an opportunity create a high-quality environment that is more appropriate to the edge of village location than an employment use. The residential development can be sensitively designed to respect the character of the location, as required by draft NDP Policy P1 (Site Allocation – Land at Fibrex Nurseries) and Policy P.3 (Design Policy).

Effective Use of Land

The draft Neighbourhood Plan appears to have used a line for the proposed allocation that does not include all of the existing structures on the site. The Housing Background Paper to the draft Neighbourhood Plan suggests that the extent of the allocation is not based on firm evidence, but rather the preferences of those responding to consultations on earlier versions of the draft Plan.

A residential development and associated land take at the front of the site, as proposed in the current draft Plan, is likely to make the remainder of the Fibrex nurseries site unviable, and the Neighbourhood Plan's proposal with regards to the future use of the remaining land and associated buildings at the site is unclear. The extent of the proposed allocation will artificially constrain the site's ability to accommodate further housing and does not appear to align with the commitment of SWDP Policy 13 that '*...housing development in south Worcestershire will make the most effective and efficient use of land*'.

Our client seeks an amendment to Policy 1, and the allocation of the full Fibrex Nurseries site to realise the potential of the land to contribute to a sustainable pattern of development. In amending this Policy, the Fibrex Nurseries site could better contribute to achieving a suitable housing mix, bungalows and affordable housing provision, identified within other policies of the Draft NDP.

Policy P2 (Housing Mix) – Note

The draft Policy sets out a proposed mix of houses and identifies a focus on bungalows, small family homes (up to 3 bedroom) and starter homes (up to two bedroom). The Policy discourages four or more bedroomed homes, unless there is 'overwhelming' supporting evidence. The Policy would apply to development sites of 3 dwellings or more, including the proposed allocation at Fibrex Nurseries.

The draft Policy seeks to influence the mix of housing on new development sites in Pebworth, having regard to the existing housing stock and age profile of the existing population. We have concerns that the specified mix of houses has not been market tested, and that the specific mix of bungalows and smaller properties proposed may not generate sufficient value to meet the costs of development. In this scenario, sites would not come forward for development.

Policy P3 (Design Policy) – Note

The Policy is supported in terms of the requirement for development to make a positive contribution towards the distinctive character and form of Pebworth Parish.

The requirement for development to reduce flood risk and achieve a betterment in surface water run-off rates exceeds the requirements of Policy SWDP 29, which makes a clear distinction between the run-off rates that greenfield and previously developed sites are required to meet. Greenfield sites need only demonstrate that the post-development run-off rate will not increase, provided there are no identified surface water run-off issues, whereas the draft Neighbourhood Plan policy requires that all sites show a betterment in surface run off rates.

The draft Neighbourhood Plan policy should be amended to ensure it is consistent with SWDP Policy 29. It should require that the minimum requirement for greenfield sites is the surface water run-off shall not increase, and that proposals on brownfield land must show a 20% reduction in surface water run-off rates compared to the pre-development situation.

Policy P4 (Local Green Space Policy) – No comments

No comments.

Policy P5 (Protect Locally Important Views) – Note

The draft Policy seeks to protect important views and vistas from any adverse impact of new development. Development will not be supported where its design, scale, height, massing, or light generated will cause the loss of, or have a detrimental impact on identified views and vistas. Viewpoint 1 ('Panoramic views of Cotswold escarpment including Meon Hill and Dover's Hill from Broad Marston Road and Honeybourne Road') is in close proximity to the Fibrex Nurseries site.

The draft Neighbourhood Plan policy goes beyond the requirements of SWDP Policy 25, by prescribing that development should not result in 'any' adverse impact on the views and vistas identified. The Policy should be amended to reflect the approach and wording of the SWDP policy, which requires that proposals consider landscape character assessments and guidelines, are appropriate to and integrate with the character of landscape setting, and conserve and where appropriate enhance primary characteristics defined in the assessments and important features.

Policy P6 (Footpaths) – No comments

No comments.

Policy 7 (Protect Community Facilities) – Support

Our client supports the Policy aspiration to retain existing community facilities. The proposed allocation at Fibrex Nurseries will support all aspects of village life and existing facilities such as Pebworth Primary School (currently under capacity and an identified subject of concern for local residents), the Village Hall, St Peter's Church, the Mason's Arms Public House, the Mobile Library service and bus services to nearby settlements including Stratford-upon-Avon.

The new resident population associated with the development of the Fibrex Nurseries site would support the Parish Council in its aspirations to create new community facilities including a community pub / café and community shop, as outlined in Section 8.0 of the draft Plan (Implementation – Infrastructure Projects).

The demand and level of support for these and services would also be increased through a larger allocation at the Fibrex Nurseries site.

Policy P8 (Rural Employment – Existing Buildings) – No comments

No comments.

Policy P9 (Retaining Existing Employment Opportunities in the Parish) – No comments

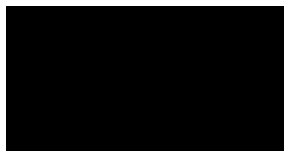
No comments.

General Comments on the Plan

Our client supports the broad objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan and agrees that the development of land at Fibrex Nurseries would make a positive contribution to sustainable development and support the future vitality of Pebworth village, and Pebworth Parish as a whole.

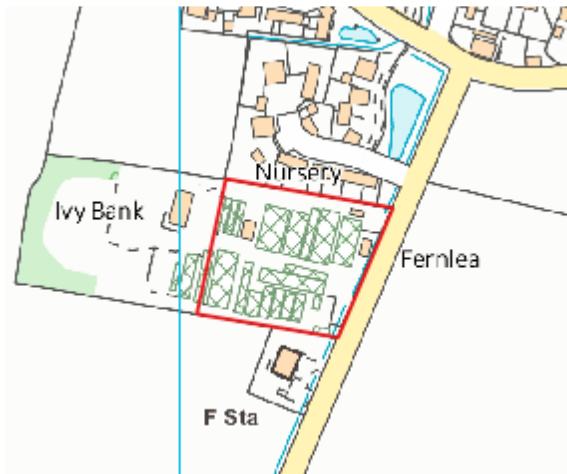
A larger allocation at Fibrex Nurseries would maximise the opportunities associated with the site and provide market and affordable housing for local people, without relying on other developments out with the Parish boundary. It would provide additional support for existing and proposed community facilities.

Yours faithfully

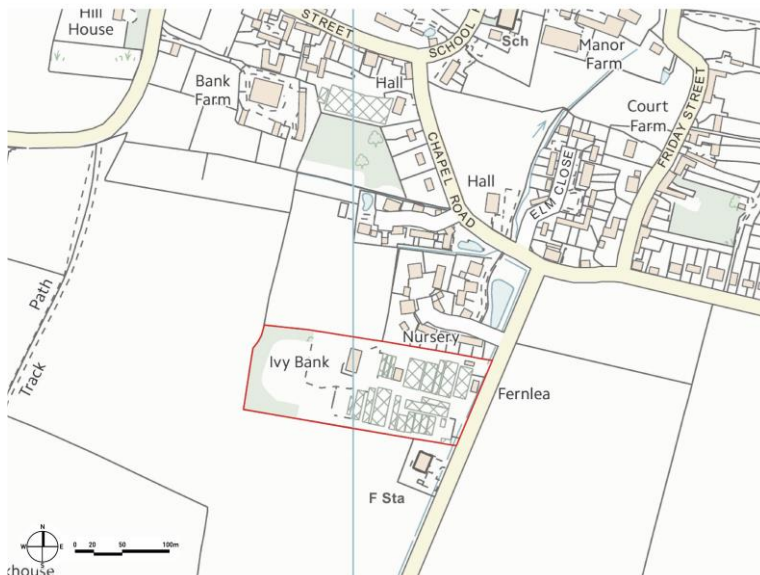


Richard Cooke
Associate

Appendix 1



Fibrex Nurseries - Proposed Neighbourhood Plan Allocation



Full Extent of Fibrex Nurseries Site